

Across the U.S., road trips are in season every autumn

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NEW YORK — Fall is the nicest season for rolling down the car windows, taking a drive and enjoying the scenery. Stop along the way to pick pumpkins, visit a winery or stroll a woodsy trail sparkling with reds and golds.

Here are a few routes around the country to consider as you plan your autumn outings.

COLORADO: Here, fall means yellow cottonwood trees and red and gold aspens. Fall is also mating season for elk, which put on a show by making loud distinctive calls known as bugling. They can be seen and heard through the end of October and into early November in Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, Mueller Park and many other places around the state.

One hourlong drive runs along Highway 141 from Grand Junction to Gateway, about 50 miles, with elevations from 4,500 to 7,000 feet. The best time to go is early September through mid-October.

GREAT RIVER ROAD: This 2,000-mile road runs along the Mississippi River in Mississippi, Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota. In addition to fall colors and river views, you'll find rustic red barns, antique stores and historic sites such as Mark Twain's hometown of Hannibal, Mo., and the Effigy Mounds National Monument in Iowa. Details at www.byways.org/explore/byways/2279.

NEW ENGLAND: Nothing compares to the explosion of red, yellow, orange, green and gold across New England each autumn.

Head to Wareham for the Cranberry Harvest Celebration, Oct. 6-7. For more cranberry tours and events around Massachusetts, go to www.cranberries.org/cranberries/bog-tours.html.

In central and northern Maine, the farther north you go on Route 201, the fewer towns you'll see. But watch out for moose and logging trucks! Start the trip in Skowhegan

(Exit 133 off Interstate 95) and in 75 miles you'll be in Jackman. The National Scenic Byways Program refers to the winding road as the Old Canada Road Scenic Byway. Just past Jackman is the border with Quebec. Loop back south of Jackman by taking Route 15 east to Rockwood and Greenville on Moosehead Lake. While you're at the lake, take a moose-watching tour — www.mooseheadlake.org/moose.shtml. Head back to Skowhegan by taking Route 15 to Dover-Foxcroft, then Route 150.

For Connecticut, you'll find fall drive ideas at www.CTvisit.com/driving-loops/fall-loops-main.asp. The Litchfield Hills Driving Loop, a scenic 100-mile route through small towns, begins in Torrington at the intersection of Routes 202 and 63. Head north on Route 8 to Winsted, then Route 44 to Canaan. Take Route 7 past the historic West Cornwall Covered Bridge across the Housatonic River. From there, Route 45 heads to Warren and becomes a scenic road around Lake Waramaug. In New Preston take Route 202, then head south on Route 47 to Washington Depot and north on Route 109 to East Morris. Route 63 heading north takes you back to Litchfield, then go east on Route 118 to Route 8 to close the loop.

Enter Vermont via Interstate 89 and start a scenic route at Exit 9. Head south on Route 100B to Route 100 along the Mad River. You'll see rolling hills, family farms and the Green Mountains. Route 100 is also home to interesting shops such as Mad River Glass Gallery and restaurants such as the 1824 Inn. Take a right on Route 17 west toward the Appalachian Gap (known locally as the "App Gap") mountain pass through the Green Mountains.

In Rhode Island, a classic autumn drive begins on Route 3 from Exit 1 off I-95 toward downtown Westerly. Follow Route 1A to the seaside village of Watch Hill and

take a spin on the nation's oldest carousel. Stroll along Bay Street before following Route 1A and Route 1 north through Charlestown, Wakefield and Narragansett Pier. From Wickford, follow Route 102 north through the Pawcatuck Borderlands. Look for signs for farm-stands and pick-your-own orchards. For more information on fall in Rhode Island, go to www.visitrhodeisland.com.

In New Hampshire, the Connecticut River Scenic Byway parallels New England's longest river. Meander through the towns of Charlestown and Claremont, across Cornish-Windsor Covered Bridge to Windsor, Vt., and cross back to New Hampshire, where you can also stop in at the Dartmouth College and Hood Museum of Art. In Cornish, stroll through 150 acres at the former home of sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Details at www.byways.org/explore/byways/2487.

NEW YORK: The Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway — www.cayugalake.com — is a 90-mile loop around the longest of New York's Finger Lakes. The route includes 19 wineries and 215-foot-tall Taughannock Falls. Routes 5 and 20 take you across the northern part of the loop, Route 89 runs on the western side and Route 90 is on the eastern side. North of the loop you'll find the Montezuma Wildlife Refuge.

VIRGINIA: The Monticello Wine Trail, located in the Charlottesville area near Thomas Jefferson's historic home (about 120 miles from Washington, D.C.), showcases 21 wineries, www.monticellowine.com. October is also "Virginia Wine Month," with festivals, special events and package deals; details at www.virginia.org/wine.

Elsewhere in Virginia, just 75 miles from Washington, D.C., in the town of Front Royal, you'll find the entrance to Shenandoah National Park — www.nps.gov/shen. From there, Skyline Drive runs 105 miles south to Rockfish Gap, where



it meets the Blue Ridge Parkway. You can drive Skyline in a day with stops along the way at scenic overlooks and loop trails through the woods. The 1.3-mile Limberlost Trail (at milepost 43) is a magical walk through a dense forest of towering trees, perfect for a family outing.



AP PHOTO

CALL OF THE WILD: Autumn is elk mating season and Gateway, Colo., is a great place to see the animals and hear their bugling mating calls.